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In the belief that large numbers of college teachers would be eager to experiment with new teaching techniques and design new courses if they were given the opportunity and time to do so, the Union for Research and Experimentation in Higher Education established "Project Changeover." There was immense support for this summer workshop devoted to the development of major innovations in content or method of teaching. A similar program, "Outreach," focusing on teams of faculty and students, is being developed. An enlightening aspect of Project Changeover was the opportunity to bring together the innovators after they had tried their new designs for a year on their own campuses. Despite the careful initial development of methods and ideas, most teachers had encountered unexpected difficulties. The obstacles most frequently reported were: the innovation needed more time than anticipated; readiness of the students was overestimated; the relative isolation of the experimenter on his campus; and a shortage of necessary facilities. There are ways to overcome these restraints and the recommendation dealing with the problem of facilities relates to an organizational change that would contribute substantially toward incentives for innovation--the establishment of units for research and development of the college or university itself. When constructive innovation becomes the dominant concern of the institution, the question of how to establish "reward systems" for faculty creativity will have been answered. (JS)

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REWARD SYSTEMS FOR INNOVATION

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Section 22
Tuesday, March 4

REWARD SYSTEMS FOR INNOVATION*

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The topic for this session, which I am to introduce by a brief analysis, strikes me as implying a misleading model. We usually speak of "reward systems" when we are trying to get someone to do something that he doesn't much want to do. The image which comes to my mind is a balky mule. He is resolutely immobile, obstinate, obdurate and refractory. He is stuck in a rut, intractable and impervious. To move him one must cajole or threaten, bribe or prod. Is that fantasy at all appropriate to our colleagues or ourselves?

That late genius, Kurt Lewin, taught us that the smooth pathway to social change is to reduce resistance. Rather than increase pressures by some carrot-in-front or stick-behind tactics, we need only to release the forces already driving toward our desired objectives. From this point of view, the wise strategy is to remove obstacles and to reduce anxieties which have been blocking an existing readiness to innovate.

The corresponding image in my fantasy is an animal trapped on a treadmill. He would like nothing better than to get off it and be free to move when and where he wishes, but he is under constant pressure from the moving platform beneath his feet and is prevented from escape by the side-rails and the painful prods ahead and behind. Like the Red Queen and Alice-Through-the-Looking-Glass, he must run constantly just to stay in place. If this image is congruent with feelings among most college teachers, we should be seeking not "rewards" but release!

Many of us have been swamped during each Merry-Month-of-May, by uninspired term papers, unsatisfactory examination answers, desperate students who have put off their distasteful chores and are requesting extra time; and we at about that same time receive official requests for course descriptions, text book orders, library reserve lists, film bookings, and other arrangements for our courses to begin the next September. Reluctantly we push aside any notion of significant innovation. We are on an academic treadmill and the almost inevitable response is to run in place. We repeat last term's procedures, not because we have found them so successful and not because we can't conceive better ways of teaching, but because there isn't time to be truly innovative. Our life-space is over-crowded. We think that maybe a Sabbatical will bring the opportunity to devise a fresh approach, but by the time postponed obligations have been cleared up and we have had a few days of relaxation from the years of stress, we are shocked to discover that our long anticipated holiday has slipped quickly away, and there is barely time to work up, along the traditional lines, the mimeographing for coming classes. The

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research ideas, the creative writing, the exploration of new sources, the design of innovative courses and of experiments with new techniques all get put on the closet shelf for another seven years.

Striking support for the thesis that large numbers of college teachers are really eager for a chance to develop and to try out new ideas comes from the response to Project Changeover which is directed by the Union for Research and Experimentation in Higher Education.[1] About two years ago, supported by a grant from the Kettering Foundation, the Union sent out a general announcement of a one-month summer workshop for college teachers who wished to develop a major innovation in the content or methods of their own teaching. Twenty of the 30 stipends for participants were reserved for faculty of the (at that time) ten Union colleges; only 10 places were open to applicants from other institutions. Yet, within two months, we received about 300 applications for these ten openings. Most of these represented excellent proposals, and gave evidence of strong commitment by college insturctors to the improvement of their teaching. Further evidence of dedication may be seen in the fact that, after their application had been declined, a substantial number offered to pay their own way if they could participate in the month-long session devoted to developing their own innovative ideas. The high rate of application from professors in public and private institutions, large and small, distributed from Maine to California, continued during the subsequent year of Project Changeover.

Recent student up-risings have increased the motivation of teachers to develop more relevant content and to try procedures which get students more actively involved. Even the most conservative among us, although we may take a firm public defensive stand for traditional requirements and "standards," is inwardly troubled by the protests which come these days from many of those we have regarded as our best students. The old order is changing and we cannot rely much longer on its support. The Union for Research and Experimentation in Higher Education is now engaged in an effort to fund an extension of Changeover. The new proposal is called Outreach. Like Changeover, Outreach begins with ideas for improving the work of the college. It builds up from the grass-roots, not down from Olympus. Unlike Changeover, Outreach will focus on teams of faculty and students, engaged in a project which will be broader than the work of a single teacher. It builds units within the college which may well continue to aid Research and Development. If we gain the support we have sought, we shall be able to help insturctors from thirty or forty more colleges and universities enter on their chosen program of innovation, with salaried time to develop ideas and with ample consultant help.

One of the enlightening aspects of Project Changeover was the opportunity to bring together the innovators after they had had a year back on the home campus to try out their new designs. Most of them encountered unexpected obstacles. I would like now to look briefly at the difficulties which arose, despite all the favorable factors: a design which was self-originated; time to develop it; assistance of expert consultants as well as innovative colleagues during the planning period; and some commitment from the college administration to support the experimental

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[1] A Consortium: Antioch, Bard, Goddard, Hofstra University, Loretto Heights, Monteith, Nasson, New College at Sarasota, Northeastern Illinois State College, Sarah Lawrence, Shimer and Stephens.

design for a trial period of at least one year. Examinations for each type of obstruction may disclose an appropriate way of reducing resistance.

I. One of the difficulties most frequently reported was that the innovation required more time than its originator had anticipated. Under-estimation of the work involved was characteristic of almost every project. A course built on really fresh ideas and utilizing ingenious methods for student participation, is likely to take twice the time of a more traditional offering. How can colleges - already suffering financial pressures - cope with this predicament? One possible answer may be to recognize "development" as academia already recognizes "research." It is not uncommon for a professor's load to be divided between teaching and research. Perhaps a next step might be to recognize a teaching load which includes quarter-time or half-time for innovative developments.

II. A second kind of limitation arose from over-estimating the readiness of students for the new approach. An imaginative professor, riding high on his enthusiasm for a new course or procedure, typically expects strong student support. He thinks they will be really "turned on," and is dismayed to find that, instead, they are apathetic, confused, and a little frightened. Much as they may have protested the old routines, at least students knew what to expect. With a new approach - absence of the familiar requirements - expectation of creativity - the student often feels lost. Most Changeover projects eventually won strong support from most students, but it took longer and reached fewer than the originator had expected. The implication is a greater involvement of students in the process of designing and implementing the enterprise. When they came to Changeover, the professors saw their new idea as something they themselves must prepare and carry-out. If students had been in dialogue with the instructors all along, the expectations of the innovators would have been perforce more realistic. Outreach will involve students from the outset.

III. A third problem - not so unexpected - was the relative isolation of each experimenter after he returned to his campus. The academic norm often is: "Don't bother me, and I won't bother you!" At Changeover there had been tangible fellowship. Back home, as one professor expressed it, "I was off in my corner, doing my thing." Occasionally the innovators experienced not only neglect but rejection. Any innovative proposal raises the hackles of the Establishment, because it implies that the customary procedures are not good enough. The defensive attack is to belittle the innovation. The experimenter is accused - implicitly more often than explicitly - of setting himself above his colleagues, of toadying favor from students, of trying to win a popularity contest by lowering precious academic standards. Our recommendation for coping with the predicament of the lonely innovator has been to see the desirable unit for change as a campus team rather than as a single isolated professor. Members of the collaborative team can improve the design of the project because each has insights that others lack. They can forge a cohesive unit of mutual support. The resistance of the Old Guard will not disappear, but a team is not so safe a target as is a single deviate person.

IV. In almost every institution of higher education today, there is a shortage of facilities. The numbers of applicants, the expansion of knowledge, and the costs of new technologies in research and instruction have all increased faster than have the available financial resources. Colleges thus must choose whether to cut back on established programs or to say "No" to requests from innovators.

Many participants in Changeover told us that while the administration honored its commitment to permit the experiment, they felt unable to provide the required space, books, and other new equipment. If the President and Deans want to encourage an innovative faculty, the budget will need to provide a generous - or at least fair - allocation of the scarce facilities. If Departmental control over funds makes it difficult for inter-departmental, or extra-curricular projects to get adequate support, a college-wide supplementary fund to assist innovations might be a helpful addition.

This fourth recommendation connects with an organizational change which would contribute substantially toward incentives for innovation. I refer to the establishment of units devoted to research and development of the college or university itself. Although higher education, by research in other fields, has been responsible for an immense acceleration in technology and has led most lively corporations to increase the proportion of their budget allocated to R-and-D, the educational institutions have devoted only negligible amounts to evaluation and improvement of their own operations. When a university begins to subsidize research and development within its own bailiwick to something like the extent that industry now supports this function, the effect on faculty will be impressive.

Antioch is only a small college, but it provides something like $40,000 at present for its Office of Programmed Development and Research. Another Antioch feature is a modest fund which can be quickly available to faculty who want to get started on some kind of improvement in their work. The Director, Samual Baskin, emphasizes that he makes application for this "seed money" as simple as possible. No red tape or committee consideration or delay! A man with an idea comes to Sam, explains what he would like to do, and is immediately, with no formal filing of bureaucratic papers, allocated the hundred dollars or two or three hundred he may need to launch his idea. Later these pilot projects may lead to major requests for government or foundation support. The psychological impact of the Antioch program is due largely to the fact that starting is made easy.

It is generally true that recognition and advancement within the academic disciplines depends on substantive research and publications. Innovative teaching, especially of the kind which crosses over the lines which separate traditional disciplines, may be more of a liability than an asset in bringing a professor advancement, within his academic field, An analogy may be drawn with student counseling and personnel services. When these services were provided only out of the marginal time of professors, the faculty members who devoted much attention to guiding individual students suffered in their professional status. So the personnel departments and divisions emerged, and some people moved away from their departmental teaching into part-time or full-time counseling careers. When most colleges have established strong, wall financed units to foster innovation and experimentation in the content and methods of their own instruction, the innovative professor will also have a second career ladder open to him.

The institutional change, expressed by a R-and-D center on the campus, will facilitate movement from sporadic innovation toward continuous reconstruction. Too many of the experiments being tried today are piece-meal and opportunistic. The goal of a good R-and-D service in a university should be the self-renewal

that is a constant, cumulative flow. It should become integral rather than hit-and-miss, here-and-there, now-and-then. One of the deterrents to good innovation today is the sense that any new course or new field experiment is viewed as well outside the main stream of college progress. It is odd, deviate, discrepant, and off-beat. It lies in the far-out territory of the reformer and iconoclast. Some of us envision a situation, not too distant, in which curriculum change, new methods in the classroom and new developments off-campus will become core rather than marginal activities. Improvement in our educational function can be orderly, cumulative and right at the heart of excellence. When constructive innovation becomes the dominant and central concern of the whole - administration, faculty, students - college, the question of how to set up "reward systems" for faculty creativity will already have been well answered.